

Memorandum on the Use of the Term "Canadian Nationalism"

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In its 1968 resolution, "Canada-U.S. Relations", the League identified with the developing sentiment against growing U.S. influence in Canada. Supplementary material contained in the pamphlet of that name, challenged the NDP to meet this sentiment that was developing among youth, particularly on the campuses, and being expressed in New Left circles.

We characterized this sentiment as anti-imperialist, developing in an anti-Canadian capitalist direction. We pointed out that it found no support by any layer of the Canadian bourgeoisie, which had long since opted for a junior partnership with U.S. imperialism.

While there was no question in our mind as to its character and dynamic, we did not at that time accept the term, Canadian nationalism. We said, "This term is a misnomer, causing confusion rather than giving insight into this phenomenon, its dynamic and direction."

Why the confusion? We said: "Nationalism in advanced capitalist countries has traditionally been a tool of the ruling class." We mentioned the second imperialist world war and Quebec -- where the ruling Canadian capitalist class used nationalism against oppressed peoples at home and abroad and against the Canadian working class.

Contrasting this reactionary phenomenon with the new nationalism we said: "Far from promoting this 'nationalism' the Canadian ruling class, their parties and their spokesmen, stand firmly united against it. The bourgeoisie show such unshakeable and impervious unity in their acquiescence before U.S. imperialism and its domination over Canadian internal and external affairs that they expose themselves more and more as apologists and lickspittles for the U.S. ruling class".

Further on we said: "This brand of 'nationalism', (far) from uniting the nation behind the bourgeoisie, far from smearing over class lines, is tending to unite the overwhelming majority of all other classes and sub classes **against** the bourgeoisie. It is discrediting the traditional parties of the bourgeoisie as not representing any interests that could be said to be Canadian, as being in essence an agent of another power — a foreign power, U.S. imperialism -- whose role is increasingly becoming more clear and more hated and more feared.

"In fact the traditional parties are discrediting not only themselves but the very state institutions that they have erected to cover over the real power structure. They are saying that these institutions in reality have no power that can prevail over the economic power of the U.S. ruling class.

"In admitting that they are a party to Canada's internal and external policy being made in Washington and Wall Street the bourgeois parties are even performing the salutary task of undermining the parliamentary illusions of the Canadian people. They are underscoring the need for the working class to take power and lay down new economic foundations from which new social relations will form."

Does the term Canadian nationalism **now** cause confusion? No, it does not. In the whole four year period between 1968 and 1972 this phenomenon has broadened and deepened, finding expression in a range of struggles thrown up in the radicalization and the class struggle. In the course of these developments the name Canadian nationalism has been firmly fixed on it.

Quickly affirming our view, this Canadian nationalism found its way into the New Democratic Party. Not only did it go to the NDP, but in a very short space of time, (it) became the nucleus around which a broad left wing developed which characterized itself as socialist. The Waffle has been the main area of our NDP work.

The most massive protest of the entire youth radicalization in Canada was in response to Nixon's going ahead with the Amchitka* nuclear bomb test. This protest was not an anti-war protest but was anti-U.S. imperialist, anti-Nixon, anti-pollution and pro-Canadian. (**island in the extreme western Alaska archipelago -Ed.*)

Many of these youth carried the Canadian flag and sang "O Canada" in protest. Of all the left tendencies, we were the only one to intervene -- in fact in some areas we led the actions and took them forward into an anti-Vietnam war direction.

In this and a whole series of experiences, it has become clear that the name Canadian nationalism is the established term used in the student movement, the various radicalizing sectors, the NDP and the mass media to denote this phenomenon.

Further, this sentiment is clearly understood on a wide scale to be radical in its implications and directions. Hence there is no longer any basis to say, as we did in 1968, that the term Canadian nationalism would cause confusion. On the contrary our long insistence on qualifying the established and widely understood term for this sentiment -- substituting anti-imperialist for Canadian nationalism, putting it in quotes or brackets, and sometimes counterposing it to internationalism -- has set us apart in the eyes of the radicalizing forces affected by Canadian nationalism. It has had the impact of creating hesitancy and doubts in the minds of comrades about identifying with the healthy and progressive thrust of this current in the radicalization.

For this reason we must now end our policy of qualifying the term Canadian nationalism, which serves no purpose other than to create confusion in the minds of militants outside our movement and comrades inside our movement.

There is no question of principle involved here. There is no change in our assessment of this sentiment, the nature, direction or weight in the radicalization or class struggle in Canada from that put forward in 1968.

What is involved here is a change in name to more accurately describe this sentiment as it is and as it defines itself in life.

With respect to acceptance of new names and terminology, we can refer to Lenin, who in 1920 came up against a terminological block which prevented the international communist movement from fully understanding and identifying with the movements for colonial liberation.

The scientific terminology used by the Marxist movement to describe these movements was "bourgeois democratic", flowing from the historical character of these revolutions. But this term prevented many revolutionaries from seeing the socialist

dynamic of the colonial struggles and blocked them from fully identifying with it.

Lenin in his report on nationalities to the second congress of the Comintern proposed that the nationalist movements based on proletarian and other oppressed layers in the population of colonial countries be designated as "national revolutionary" instead of "bourgeois democratic." This name change opened the way to a full understanding of the anti-capitalist thrust of the "bourgeois democratic" revolutions in the colonial world.

Although in Canada, we are not encountering the nationalism of a colonized nation, we are dealing with a new and unique development, when we speak of Canadian nationalism. Terminology can either facilitate our understanding and identification with this important component of the radicalization or hinder it.

The term Canadian nationalism has the advantage of describing the sentiment as it is -- a developing consciousness, which expresses itself in nationalist terms, against Canada's subservient junior partner relationship to the United States.

We identify with this developing consciousness because of its profound anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist thrust and our use of the term Canadian nationalism is designed to clear the way for the intervention of our movement in this element of the radicalization.

Our decision to accept the term Canadian nationalism is based on Canadian experience, both on the particular feature of U.S. capitalism's relations with the Canadian ruling class and the response of the Canadian radicalization.

U.S. capital investment has become a big factor in the economy of a number of advanced capitalist countries. But **it plays a truly unique role in Canada.** General Motors, as we have noted, hires 25,000 Canadian employees and as a corporate entity is about one third the size of the entire Canadian economy. U.S. investment in Canada is greater than its entire Latin American investment — more key industries in Canada are under foreign control (predominantly U.S.) than in any other advanced capitalist country in the world.

Moreover, Canada's population, unlike that of any other advanced capitalist country, is concentrated in a thin strip across the U.S. northern border. Over this border floods T.V. and radio programs, books and magazines of the most violent racist and huckster character. These factors have had a tremendous impact on the thinking of Canadian youth and the working class as a whole.

In our epoch, the revolutionary socialists, the Marxists, above all must be sensitive to the new aspects of national consciousness which are developing throughout the world, and of which Canadian nationalism is an example.

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